

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 15813

FROM VATICAN OFFICE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV VT
SUBJECT: POPE JOHN PAUL I: PERSONALITY AND PROGRAM

REF: ROME 15722

1. SUMMARY: THIS MESSAGE PROVIDES THE FIRST IMPRESSIONS WHICH VATICAN WATCHERS HAVE FORMED ABOUT THE NEW POPE'S PERSONALITY AND PROGRAMMATIC PLEDGES. POPE JOHN PAUL I, THROUGH HIS FIRST TWO PUBLIC ACTS, COMES THROUGH AS A MAN OF INTENSE FAITH, CONSERVATIVE ON DOCTRINAL MATTERS BUT OPEN TO A DIALOGUE ON SOCIAL AND POLITICAL MATTERS WITH THE WORLD AT LARGE. HE HAS PROJECTED AN IMAGE OF HUMILITY AND IN HIS PROGRAMMATIC ENDEAVORS HE HAS PROMISED TO CONTINUE IN THE PATHS OF VATICAN COUNCIL II. END SUMMARY.

2. THE FIRST ASSESSMENTS OF THE NEW POPES PERSONALITY HAVE BEEN VERY POSITIVE. VATICANOLOGISTS NOTE THAT THE NEW POPE'S IMMENSE IMPACT ON THE CROWDS, HIS STYLE AND OTHER TRAITS ARE REMINISCENT OF POPE JOHN XXIII. INDEED, IN HIS FIRST "ANGELUS"--THE TRADITIONAL SUNDAY NOON BLESSING OF THE FAITHFUL ASSEMBLED AT ST. PETERS SQUARE--WHICH WAS WITNESSED ON

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AUGUST 27 BY A CROWD OF 150,000 PEOPLE, POPE JOHN PAUL I DEEPLY IMPRESSED OBSERVERS BY HIS DOWN TO EARTH STYLE, HIS SIMPLE AND HUMBLE MANNER AND HIS ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE COMMON MAN. THERE IS NEARLY UNANIMOUS FAVORABLE COMMENT ON HIS ESSENTIALLY PASTORAL EXPERIENCE AND APPROACH AND PARTICULARLY AN APPRECIATIVE CHARACTERIZATION OF THE NEW POPE AS "A POPE WHO SMILES". ALTHOUGH OBSERVERS ALSO NOTE HIS LACK

OF DIPLOMATIC AND CURIAL EXPERIENCE, THEY DO NOT MAKE MUCH OF IT--ALTHOUGH IT SEEMS THAT THE LACK OF CURIAL EXPERIENCE WAS A PRINCIPAL REASON FOR HIS ELECTION TO BE POPE.

3. THE NEW POPE IN HIS ADDRESS TO THE COLLEGE OF CARDINALS SUNDAY, AUGUST 27, 1978, OUTLINED THE PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS OF HIS PROGRAM AS FOLLOWS:

- TO CARRY FORTH THE LEGACY OF THE 2ND VATICAN COUNCIL;
- TO PRESERVE THE INTEGRITY OF THE GREAT DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH IN THE LIFE OF PRIESTS AND OF THE FAITHFUL;
- TO REMIND THE ENTIRE CHURCH THAT ITS FIRST DUTY IS THAT OF EVANGELIZATION;
- TO CONTINUE THE ECUMENICAL THRUST, SET BY HIS IMMEDIATE PREDECESSORS "WITHOUT YIELDING ON DOCTRINE BUT ALSO WITHOUT HESITATION".
- TO PURSUE WITH PATIENCE BUT FIRMNESS THAT CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE THAT PAUL VI HAD AT THE BASE OF HIS PLAN AND PROGRAM FOR PASTORAL ACTION, " ALSO WITH THOSE WHO DO NOT SHARE OUR FAITH;"
- TO SUPPORT ALL INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES THAT CAN SAFEGUARD AND INCREASE PEACE IN A TROUBLED WORLD.

4. ADDRESSING HIMSELF TO "THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD" THE POPE COMMITTED HIS PAPACY TO ENCOURAGING THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD TO BUILD UP "AN EFFICACIOUS AND RESPONSIBLE STRUCTURE FOR A NEW ORDER THAT WOULD BE MORE JUST AND HONEST", AND HE DREW CONFIDENTIAL

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PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE "TORTURED LAND OF LEBANON," TO THE SITUATION IN THE HOMELAND OF JESUS (PALESTINE), TO THE SAHEL AND TO INDIA. HE ALSO PLEDGED HIS PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL STRENGTH TOWARDS THE SERVICE OF TRUTH, JUSTICE, PEACE, HARMONY, AND COLLABORATION "WITHIN NATIONS AS WELL AS RAPPORT AMONG PEOPLE," MAKING "NO DISTINCTION AS TO RACE OR IDEOLOGY".

5. COMMENT: BY HIS CHOICE OF THE NAME, JOHN PAUL I, IN HIS FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE PUBLIC AND HIS FIRST PROGRAMMATIC STATEMENT, THE NEW POPE HAS PROJECTED AN IMAGE WHICH HAS ALREADY ENDEARED HIM TO THE PEOPLE OF ROME AND HAS ENGENDERED WIDELY POSITIVE COMMENTS ON THE PART OF BOTH THE ITALIAN AND THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS. IN HIS PROGRAMMATIC DIRECTIONS HE HAS SOUGHT TO INSTILL DISCIPLINE TO THE CHURCH AND TO AGGREGATE GOODWILL BEHIND HIS PAPACY BY INVOKING THE PRINCIPLE OF "COLLEGIALITY" IN CHURCH AFFAIRS AND BY ASKING FOR HARMONY AND UNITY WITHIN THE CHURCH. AT THE SAME TIME HE HAS ENDEAVORED TO ELICIT EXTERNAL GOODWILL BY PROMISING TO MAINTAIN THE INITIATIVES TOWARD THE WORLD AT LARGE WHICH POPES JOHN AND PAUL HAVE CHARTERED BEFORE HIM, THROUGH HIS SPECIFIC ENDORSEMENT OF THE GOAL OF CHRISTIAN UNITY, OF THE DIALOGUE WITH NON-CHRISTIANS AND NON-BELIEVERS AND HIS PLEDGE TO DEDICATE HIMSELF TO

BRINGING ABOUT JUSTICE,PEACE,HARMONY AND COLLABORATION
"WITHIN NATIONS AS WELL AS RAPPORT AMONG PEOPLES," WITHOUT
"DISTINCTION AS TO RACE OR IDEOLOGY--".HOLMES

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